



# CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS FOUNDATION

## CONGRESSIONAL ADVISORY MEMBERS

Congressman Randy Forbes  
Senator James Lankford  
Congressman Mark Walker  
Congressman Rick Crawford  
Congressman Randy Hultgren  
Senator John Boozman  
Congressman Robert Aderholt  
Congressman Brian Babin  
Congressman Marsha Blackburn  
Congressman John Carter  
Congressman Mike Conaway  
Congressman Kevin Cramer  
Congressman Jeff Fortenberry  
Congressman Gregg Harper  
Congressman Vicky Hartzler  
Congressman Jody Hice  
Congressman Richard Hudson  
Congressman Bill Huizenga  
Congressman Doug Lamborn  
Congressman Steve Pearce  
Congressman Robert Pittenger  
Congressman Paul Ryan  
Congressman Chris Smith  
Congressman Glenn Thompson  
Congressman Tim Walberg  
Congressman Joe Wilson  
Congressman Robert Wittman

November 1, 2018

Mr. Alan Crump  
Chief of Police  
Shreveport Police Department  
1234 Texas Avenue  
Shreveport, LA 71101

Re: Department Sponsorship of Prayer Vigils

Dear Chief Crump:

I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation. The Foundation serves nearly 100 members of Congress who are part of the Congressional Prayer Caucus (the names of those members of Congress who serve on the Congressional Prayer Advisory Team are listed on the left).

In addition, the Foundation serves Legislative Prayer Caucuses in 33 states which have over 1,000 state senators and state representatives as members. These leaders are working together to preserve the integrity of our first principles and protect First Amendment rights for all.

We recently learned that the Freedom From Religion Foundation ("FFRF") wrote you a letter objecting to monthly community prayer vigils organized by police department chaplains and then promoted on the Department's social media. FFRF argues that all chaplain programs are suspect, although perhaps military chaplains overseas may be acceptable if the servicemen could not otherwise worship God. FFRF alleges that police chaplains cannot be tolerated because Americans typically can exercise their First American right to worship without inconvenience in America.

FFRF leaves out, of course, the fact that the Supreme Court has held that *paid* chaplaincies are *constitutional*. FFRF's letter further neglects to point out that historically, American Presidents have called on the *nation* to pray, and Congress officially sanctioned prayer by creating by official legislation the National Day of Prayer. Prayer has been embedded in this nation long before the Shreveport Police Department began what we assume is an unpaid, volunteer chaplaincy program. We understand from news sources that you have

disbanded the practice of sponsoring and promoting prayer vigils because of FFRF's letter. We urge you and the City to reconsider this action.

Assuming for purposes of argument that a police chaplain is a "government official," it is certainly not new for a government official to ask people to pray. George Washington issued the first presidential call to prayer on October 3, 1789. He wrote, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor." Since then, there have been over 130 presidential calls to prayer, and in 1952 President Harry Truman signed a law making the National Day of Prayer an annual event.

The constitutionality of government-sponsored prayer was first considered nearly 45 years ago. In *Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. 783 (1983), a state legislator challenged his legislature's practice of hiring a chaplain (always a Christian of the same denomination) who always opened the legislative sessions with a Judeo-Christian prayer. The legislator contended that this practice violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. In soundly rejecting this contention, Chief Justice Burger wrote that state-sponsored prayer is "deeply embedded in the history and tradition of this country." 463 U.S. at 786. Regarding history, the Chief Justice noted that three days after Congress authorized the appointment of paid chaplains, Congress reached a final agreement on the language of the Bill of Rights. The Chief Justice reasonably concluded that the men who wrote the First Amendment's Religion Clause did not view state-sponsored prayer as a violation of that Amendment. Regarding tradition, the Chief Justice further wrote that state-sponsored prayer has continued without interruption ever since the First Congress, and has been consistently followed in most of the states. 463 U.S. at 788-89.

These principles in *Marsh* were reaffirmed a couple years ago in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, 134 S. Ct. 1811 (2014), where the Supreme Court once again held that state-sponsored prayer is constitutionally permissible. In his opinion for the Court, Justice Kennedy highlighted our nation's historic use of prayer, further stating that "the First Congress provided for the appointment of chaplains only days after approving language for the First Amendment [which] demonstrates that the Framers considered legislative prayer a benign acknowledgment of religion's role in society. . . . As a practice that has long endured, legislative prayer has become part of our heritage and tradition, part of our expressive idiom, similar to the Pledge of Allegiance, inaugural prayer, or the recitation of 'God Save the United States and this honorable Court' at the opening of this Court's sessions." *Id.* at 1819, 1825.

Inviting people to pray is a part of our country's history and tradition. The department's chaplains' role in inviting people to the monthly prayer vigil is nothing more than presidents and governors have historically done. FFRF claims that the law requires neutrality between religion and non-religion, but then misconstrues this to argue that religion should be *excluded* from the public square, such as the police department. This interpretation is wrong. If the

---

department in its social media promotes community events other than the prayer vigils, then it is actually discriminating *against* religion by eliminating the prayer vigils from coverage. As the Supreme Court in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 313-314 (1952) stated, "We find no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and to throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence."

If we can be of any service to you on this issue, feel free to contact us. We have First Amendment lawyers on staff who will work with you, without charge, if you need their services. To protect our freedom, we must exercise that freedom. May God bless you and the citizens of Shreveport.

Sincerely,



Lea Carawan  
Executive Director